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NEW YORK LETTER

Although there is nothing of positively startling moment at this year's Society of American Artists' exhibition, the general average is better than it has been for a long while, and the methods of the painters contributing show a tendency toward more conservatism and sanity. There is almost a complete absence of the weird, startling canvases on the impressionistic order, and as a rule the men who have hitherto worked along these lines seem to have contented themselves with taking the best from the practitioners of the cult and rejecting the bad, so that their work is that much the stronger and comprehensible. The deflection of the "Ten" who went their own way two years ago has not weakened the parent society, and their absence is not noticeable.

Irving Wiles, whose picture of a very charming young woman arranging her hair before a mirror has taken the Shaw Fund award, is a skillful painter, with a pleasing notion of color, and as a craftsman he is above reproach. This work is one of his very best, and attracts much favorable attention. Its faults are the faults the man has always shown, and are mainly a lack of vigor and masculinity, with occasionally an absence of construction. It is an able performance, and its limitations are only such as the painter himself possesses and will probably never escape from. The landscape obtaining the Webb prize is by a hitherto unknown man, Mr. W. Elmer Schofield. It is called "Autumn in Brittany," and represents a bit of nature, with a house and some trees. It is direct and clever in the painting, showing little imagination, and being mainly notable for the pleasing color game exploited. There are much more serious landscapes in the exhibition, but most of them, for one reason or another, were not in competition, both age limit and previous winnings barring a number.

One of the most distinguished figure pieces in the display is a mother and child, by Sargeant Kendall, a man who shows in this and other work here remarkable improvement and masterly qualities. Mr. Kendall has been painting for some time in a crude, forced scheme of color, most disagreeable and unsympathetic. This time he has entirely emancipated himself therefrom, and has come out in a naive, healthy direction, painting conscientiously what he has seen, investing his theme with great feeling and poetry, and giving to a trite and threadbare theme a sentiment and a personality entirely charming. This work received a tie vote with that of Mr. Wiles on the first ballot. William M. Chase, a painter among painters, has here a delight-



SCURRYING HOME
BY ALFRED STIEGLITZ

ful portrait sketch of the sculptor Daniel C. French. It is to the life, seen through the temperament of his friend and co-worker. A landscape of the Shinnecock Hills by Mr. Chase is much the most complete thing here as an out-of-doors study. It is called "The Wanderers." Louis Loeb's "Temple of the Winds" is seen to advantage, and is a most ambitious work, with which Chicago is familiar, while his portrait of the novelist Zangwill is marvelously lifelike, which unfortunately means it is not a thing of beauty; but there are no better portraits here than this.

The portraits, by the way, are many. Robert B. Brandegee, probably one of the rarest exhibitors among the better men at the society, has a delightful portrait of an elderly lady. Mr. Brandegee works slowly, gets his effects with great labor, and has little or no cleverness; but when he succeeds he succeeds admirably, and this year he is at his best. Kenyon Cox, Frank Fowler, August Franzén, H. D. Murphy, William M. J. Rice, Amanda Brewster Sewell, William Thorne, and Dora Keith Wheeler all have good portraits, and by Edward Bell there is a really delightful decorative panel called "The Dancer."

Miss Cecilia Beaux must, of course, have a paragraph to herself, for her work is of much importance in these days in the exhibitions. None of our painters is more able, and none has more distinction. There are three canvases by her here prominently displayed, and all are good. One of a man, in white flannels, with a cat on his lap, is a tour de force, and fairly riots in dexterity. It may be that there is a suspicion of almost too much facility, to the detriment of form, but the accomplishment is so remarkable we may forgive her almost anything in the sum total. A boy has also much of this quality of ease in the painting, and the portrait of Dr. Huntington is able and impressive in the treatment of not only the face and hands, but the subtle blacks as well.

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Those paradoxical Ten American Painters, who only once out of the three exhibitions have been ten, and are as a rule Nine, do not in this season's display establish any valid claims to the right to secession, save on the general principles of the American constitution. Their show is by no means impressive. Mr. Simmons' two portraits would have been not out of place at the society, and Mr. Weir's work did not need a special gallery to hold its own. Nor have Mr. Tarbell, Mr. Benson, or Mr. Hassam anything new to say. Mr. Twachtman, with some landscapes, is much the same as he was last year; there is no invention to his canvases, and he only exploits the same themes already well known as coming from his brush. His methods do not always lend themselves to the expression of his subjects, and too frequently there are indecision and emasculation where greater strength would have better served the purpose. The one

contribution by Willard Metcalf is a study of a nude, not too able, suggesting the work of the advanced student rather than of the man who has arrived. There is an excellent portrait by Joseph Decamp, his only contribution, and a fine work by Robert Reid, of a nude, with a larger canvas of three beautiful young women doing nothing gracefully, but without much excuse for being save to exploit his ability to draw and paint. The whole performance of the Ten-Nine men is marked by a poverty of intellectual expression, little gray matter having been expended on any composition here.



In a much healthier direction is the work of Horatio Walker, seen at the gallery of Mr. Montross, on Fifth Avenue. Mr. Montross's gallery, by the way, is a great addition to the display-rooms of this city, and his serious appreciation of native work is most commendable. Already he has given this winter shows by Thomas W. Dewing and Dwight W. Tryon, and now Mr. Walker's work has been arranged in a comprehensive and educational manner at once delightful to the connoisseur and the student. Although there are but seven pictures by Mr. Walker, there are many sketches and pages from his notebooks, and all these make mighty interesting sight-seeing. Mr. Walker is quite the best of our animal painters, and with the best of color notions he succeeds in giving qualities of great seriousness and strength to his compositions. He draws very well, and one may see from these notebooks how seriously he has gone about his preliminary work, searching, experimenting, and studying forms with an application the student would do well to follow.

One large canvas is called "Plowing; the First Gleam," and on this big canvas four oxen are dragging a plow. They are urged on by a Homeric figure, who is silhouetted against an early morning sky of rarely beautiful color, through which come gleams of sunlight. One feels thoroughly the time and the place. Cool mists rise from the earth; there is the chill in the air, and men and beasts are full of the power and dignity of labor. There are action, force, and the verisimilitude of out-of-doors life, all felt in a sympathetic and artistic manner. This is one of the best works by him we have seen, but all the others contain the same elements of sobriety, masterly facility, and command of the medium, with the underlying solid training, that mark the genuine artist.

The sale of pictures by the older masters, Italian, French, German, Dutch, and English, belonging to Theron J. Blakeslee and Eugene Fischhof, the New York dealers, was a disappointment to the owners and a surprise to the public. The low prices realized were due perhaps to the fact that the public is inclined to look with suspicion on dealers' sales. In times past many of these auctions have been more or less farces, and most, if not all, of the canvases were protected,

coming up again in the shops with blushing effrontery. There were some excellent examples of the early Englishmen, a really fine Copley of large size, and a number of good canvases by the masters, such as Van Dyke, Rubens, and others, including the gifted early Dutch portrait painters. The public, however, bid slowly, and though there were among the buyers many men well known in the world of collectors, there were no high prices paid. For 166 pictures the sum of \$182,285 was realized.

The pictures belonging to the theatrical manager Augustin Daly were of absolutely no artistic value, the two or three good examples being quite swamped by the preponderance of bad work; and the furniture was of a highly theatrical order as well, as being gaudy to a degree. The books, however, were many and good, and the prices paid show that as a rule Mr. Daly selected well. The total in this direction was \$166,035. At the present writing the American Art Galleries, where were sold the Daly books, is full of pictures and beautiful porcelains, the former belonging to Frederick Bonner and the American Art Association itself, which is selling, so the announcement runs, to make room for alterations, while the porcelains come from William Churchill Oastler, a well-known collector of Philadelphia. The paintings are of a high order, and include many examples of the Barbizon school, with portraits by some of the early Englishmen and older masters, among them the Spaniard Coello, the Dutchman Bal, and others. Monet has here some of his studies for the famous Rouen cathedral series, wonderful affairs in the matter of light, but painted with such a thick impasto that it requires the entire length of the gallery to get a complete understanding of the artist's aim. However, it must be confessed they make everything about them seem dull, lifeless, and commonplace.



THE MINNEAPOLIS SOCIETY OF FINE ARTS AND ITS FIRST ANNUAL EXHIBITION

The Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts was incorporated January 31, 1883. Its general object and purpose was declared to be "to advance the knowledge and love of art through the exhibition of works of art, lectures upon subjects pertaining to art, the acquisition of books and papers for the formation of an art library, and such other means of æsthetic and general culture as come within the province of similar associations." Throughout the seventeen years of its existence the society has not swerved from a consistent pursual of its acknowledged high aims.

The management of its affairs is in the hands of a board of twenty-four directors, each serving for a term of three years, and the officers